



Tips for Parenting Teens

Be involved.

Be an example. Show your child good ways to have fun, deal with stress, and make decisions.

Read books about adolescence. It will help you know what to expect and prepare you for conflicts. You'll be able to answer your child's questions if he comes to you.

Keep your standards consistent. If your teen skips school, don't assume "he's just going through a stage." Your child's age is not an excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Get to know your child's friends and their parents. Work together with other parents to keep track of your teens. Don't invade their space, just be observant.

Respect your child's privacy. At this age, your child will want some time and space to be alone. His bedroom and phone calls should be private.

Have a good idea of what your child is reading, watching on TV, and viewing on the Internet. What kinds of video games does he play? Who does he talk to on the Internet? Your child learns from the media. Clear up any misinformation.

Find out where your child is going and who he will be with but do not expect him to give you all of the details of his activities.

You must keep your child safe and healthy. It's okay to get more involved if you suspect there is a problem.

Adolescence and Peer Pressure

(Coping with Peer Pressure)

As children grow and develop into early adolescence, involvement and attraction with their peers increases. They begin to question adult standards and the need for parental guidance. They “try on” new values and test their ideas with their peers. And even though “peer pressure” may cause adults to cringe, the fact is, peer pressure can be positive.

It can keep youth participating in activities and sports, even when they are not leaders. The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy and understanding; a place for experimentation; and a supportive setting for achieving the two primary developmental tasks of adolescence:

Identity — finding the answer to the question “Who Am I?” and

Autonomy — discovering that self as separate and independent from parents.

It is critically important that communities provide a safe, supportive, nurturing environment for adolescents as they grow up. At the same time, families must provide limits and expectations for all members to live by. Findings from a study of several hundred teenagers in several communities tell us that we cannot draw sweeping conclusions about teenagers as if they were all alike.



Urban teenagers faced with conflicting standards of family, school and social agencies were apt to reject all these values and create their own, often among peers. Suburban and rural teens, however, were more likely to have values very close to those held by the important adults in their lives — they might question adult values, but they wanted consistent rules and standards they could evaluate.

Youth, parents, school and community leaders must come together to establish workable and effective strategies to guide teen behavior and to support their transition from children to mature, responsible adults. Here are several strategies to consider (Brown, 1990):

1. **Let go of the stereotype that all peers have a negative influence.**
2. **Encourage and nurture teenagers' abilities and sense of self worth.**
3. **Empower parents and educators to help teenagers pursue and maintain positive peer relationships.**
4. **Encourage cross-ethnic and “cross-class” peer interactions and guide teenagers in dealing positively with cultural diversity and individual differences.**
5. **Place sensible restraints on part-time teen employment.**
6. **Support parent education programs for families with teenagers.**
7. **Establish intervention programs for preadolescents with low social skills or aggressive tendencies.**

Although the negative influence of peers is over-emphasized, more can be done to help teenagers experience the family and the peer group as mutually constructive environments. To accomplish this, families, communities, churches, schools, 4-H and other youth groups must work together.

